

AccessLetter

**Cambridge Commission for
Persons with Disabilities**

We've Come a Long Way, Baby... or Have We?



The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies, describes some of the earliest films of more than a hundred years ago. A mere few minutes in length, these shorts preceded the more popular

multi-reel silent works that would grow into the Hollywood industry we know today, and they were the cutting edge motion picture technology of their day.

Their freakish titles jump off the pages of Martin F. Norden's book. Among the too, too many are *The Legless Runner*, *The Cripple's Marriage*, *One-Legged Acrobats*, and *The Story of a Leg*. Today, of course, they would be an anomaly. If these names might somehow inspire hope that their producers wanted to enlighten their audiences, think again.

By exploiting the misfortunes of characters with physical disabilities, they drew in a general public looking for cheap laughs and exotic behavior. The case is made for amputees by throwing them under the weight of slapstick comedy so artificial limbs can be lost, stolen, or thrown away.

(More on Come a Long Way, page 2)

FREE Cell Phone Service to Qualified Massachusetts Residents

You see and hear people everywhere using personal cell phones. They can be very convenient for contacting people when you are not at home or work. You can let someone know if you are running late for an appointment, ask for directions if you cannot find an address, or call a taxi. Cell phones can provide security and a way to stay connected in emergency situations. If you are on a very limited income you may have thought you could not afford a cell phone. Now there is a way you may qualify for FREE wireless service.



SafeLink is a program that provides qualified Massachusetts residents with subsidized affordable wireless (cell phone) service. Qualified individuals receive a free cell phone and a basic amount of 80 FREE minutes each month. Unused minutes will never expire; they will automatically rollover to the next month. If a person runs out of minutes, they have several options for either purchasing or getting additional free minutes.

You must meet one of the following requirements in order to receive SafeLink service. Since the service is designed to assist low income families and individuals, you must already be getting assistance from one of the following state sponsored programs:

- Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children
- Social Security Income (SSI)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- Food Stamps

(More on SafeLink Phone, page 3)

SAVE THE DATE

**Disability Reframed:
A Community Film Series
Inaugural screening:
Saturday, June 6, 2009
2 PM to 5 PM**

See page 6 for more information

Come a Long Way (cont'd)

The Automobile Accident, for example, uses look-alike actors, one with both legs intact and the other a double amputee. The two are “swapped” in the movie to create the appearance of a drunken character’s “bloodless” amputation, after the car appears to run over his legs. The character awakens to find his “limbs” across the street, only to have them handed back to him so he can get up and walk away. The story reads less a comedy and more a chance to shock its audience by this early cinematic “special effect.”

Today, we get “shocked” if we care to tune in to reality TV on the broadcast networks and take in the exotic, as well as the odd, the bizarre, the eccentric, and the outlandish. The show *Dancing with the Stars* adds celebrity to this mix. A couple of seasons ago, it added Heather Mills to its list of stars.

Mills was, at the time, the estranged wife of Paul McCartney, despised by some who viewed her as a gold digger. This distinction may have earned her a place on the show, depending on your point-of-view. ABC billed her as champion of animal rights and other charity causes. She is, also, a former fashion model and an amputee, appearing visibly proud in this a role. Mills, it seems, delivered the whole celebrity package to Hollywood, worthy of taking turns on the dance floor before many millions of TV viewers.

Her original turns can still be seen through the cutting edge technology of our day. Google *Dancing with the Stars* or *Heather Mills* and the preserved YouTube clips come up. All of her dances are there. So is the archival residue of press, reported at the time of the television broadcast, anticipating her performance, full of jokes that her artificial limb might “fly off” at any moment.

Instead, she is thrilling to watch, as her artificial limb is visible under practically every costume she has on. She soars, managing to defy the jokes, as well as survive one minor fall, after her prosthesis fails to support her weight at the end of one dance. Better than other celebrities who withdrew over the course

of the broadcast, she clearly shows she was up to withstanding the rigors of the dance competition.

Mills doesn’t win. She finishes sixth, in the middle of the field. Refusing to concede her any points for her physical limitation, the judges praise her superior ability and athleticism. Their praise seems genuine. She gets the familiar, irritating remarks, too, of being an “inspiration” and “a model of courage.” But there is no bad taste in the broadcast to warrant calls to the producers.

Not that all bad taste of a hundred years ago is gone, however. Look further in this residue of free expression on the internet, and YouTube knockoffs abound with Heather Mills’ name. Only minutes in length, these potshots are aimed at her celebrity, no doubt. Their titles are aimed to draw looks.

Heather Mills’ leg falls off is a YouTube clip that looks to be identical to that featured on *Dancing with the Stars*. The segment replays one of her dances. Only it is a parody, with the superimposed image of a bloody limb flying off Mills as she dances, and then we see the bloody limb image, again, at the judges’ table after Mills finishes her dance.

There is another YouTube clip—*How Heather Mills lost her leg* pretends to be a telling of Mills’ life, with an actor pretending to be Mills herself. The producer of this video thought it would be a scream to reenact her loss, apparently. Fifteen years ago in England, in fact, a police motorcycle crashed into her as she crossed the street, running over her leg.

Some things never change.

--Bobby Vilinsky

SafeLink Phone (cont'd)

- MassHealth
- Fuel Assistance
- Transitional Aid To Families with Dependent Children

The processing time can take up to eight weeks. Eligibility is determined by the state program through which you are getting assistance, not by SafeLink

Wireless. For example, if you qualify because you are currently receiving Food Stamps, your application will be reviewed by the Massachusetts Food Stamps: Department of Transitional Assistance.

Here is the contact for the qualifying agencies. If you get MassHealth, call 1-800-841-2900. If you get Fuel Assistance, contact the local agency where you get assistance. For all the others – Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC), Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled & Children (EAEDC), or Food Stamps – call the Department of Transitional Assistance at 617-348-8500.

You can learn more about SafeLink wireless service by calling 800-977-3768 or visit www.safelinkwireless.com.

Consumer Beware: Telephone “Slamming”

Notice that your phone bill is higher than usual? Don't recognize the name of the company on your telephone bill? You might have been *slammed*. When your local or long distance telephone service is switched from your original provider to another company without your consent, this is called “slamming.” Some disreputable telecommunications companies prey on populations perceived to be vulnerable, such as people with disabilities.

The best way to avoid being *slammed* is by carefully reviewing your phone bill each month to be sure that the carrier you selected is still the one handling your calls. Always read the fine print before signing up with any carrier. In order for a carrier to change your long distance or local service, the company must obtain either written confirmation in the form of a signed letter or oral confirmation evidenced by a tape recorded call.

If you discover that your service has been changed without your consent, immediately contact your local carrier and let them know. You should not be billed for the cost of switching back to your original carrier. Remember, you have the right to choose your long distance carrier, and no one can switch you to a different one without your permission.

To safeguard against being slammed, NEVER give your phone number or any personal information – such as your address, Social Security number, bank information or credit card account numbers – to telemarketers who call you. For further assistance or information, contact the Federal Communications Commission at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) or your local Consumers' Council. For Cambridge residents the local Consumer Council is at 617-349-6150, 831 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge 02139, or consumercouncil@cambridgema.gov.

-- Corey Pilz, Cambridge Consumer Council

MBTA Bus Stop Law Takes Effect

On April 7, 2009, the fine for vehicles parked illegally in MBTA bus stops went up to \$100. In recognition of this event, the MBTA held a press conference in Cambridge's Central Square on that date. Disability rights activists mingled with MBTA officials and Cambridge City Councillors, united in their hopes that, with this stiffer penalty, motorists would think twice about parking at a bus stop “just for a minute.”



MBTA General Manager Dan Grabauskas and BCIL advocate Reggie Clark celebrate the recent passing of the MBTA Bus Stop Law

Accessible Housing Opportunities

The nonprofit Just-A-Start Corp. is seeking applicants for a one-bedroom wheelchair-accessible homeownership unit at 823 Main Street, available to moderate income households. For an application or more information, go to <www.justastart.org>, or call 617-494-0444 x340.



Also, the Cambridge Community Development Department is seeking applicants for two wheelchair-accessible, moderate income rental units, a two-bedroom unit at Third Square, and a studio unit at Archstone North Point. Mobile rental subsidies may be accepted. For more information or an application, call Donna Claudio at 617-349-4612 or e-mail: <dclaudio@cambridgema.gov>.

Upcoming Events of Interest to the Disability Community

- May 4 **Special Education Law: Children with Asperger Syndrome** – a workshop with attorney, Julia Landau, for parents presented by Asperger's Association of New England (AANE) and Mass Advocates for Children. Learn about rights and procedures which ensure children with AS receive educational opportunities that reflect competency and potential. There will be time for questions after the presentation. 7-9 pm at the AANE office, 85 Main Street, Suite 101, Watertown, 02472. Contact AANE at 617-393-3824 or <info@aane.org> to register; fee is \$10.
- May 5 **A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falls** – 8 week program sponsored by Somerville Cambridge Elder Services (SCES) will meet 9:30 – 11:30 am every Tuesday for 8 weeks at North Cambridge Senior Center, 2050 Massachusetts Ave. Program will help attendees deal with their fear of falling, improve balance, flexibility and strength, and make changes to reduce risks of falls at home. Class size is limited; for more information contact Deb McLean at 617-628-2601, x3172 or <dmclean@eldercare.org>.
- May 5 & 7 **MDDA (Manic Depression & Depressive Association) Support Group** at Mass. General Hospital meets every Tuesday and Thursday, 7 to 9 p.m. on the 4th floor in the Yawkey Building. Follow the signs. Meetings are free and open to public. For more information call 617-855-2795.
- May 6 **Senior Support Group for caregivers over 60** – meets monthly at the Family Resource Center, 20 Gould Street in Reading, 10 am - 12 noon on Wednesdays. Share and learn with other seniors who have adult family members with developmental disabilities. For more information contact Michelle Faugno at <fam2fam@thearc.org> or Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change, 16 Warwick Road, Melrose, MA 02176.
- May 6 **Injured Worker Support Meetings** – (*previously listed as RSI – repetitive strain injury*) Meetings will now scheduled by appointment, often the first Wednesday of each month, 5:15 - 6:45 pm; call RSI Action at 617-247-6827 to set up a meeting. Meetings/appointments usually take place at 650 Beacon Street, Kenmore Square, Boston, 4th Floor Conference Room, near Kenmore Square. Volunteers provide resources and support. For more information, call 617-247-6827, or go to <www.rsiaction.org>.
- May 6 **Holocaust Commemoration** – This 20th annual event by the City of Cambridge will be held at Temple Beth Shalom, 8 Tremont Street in Cambridge, 7– 9 pm. Recalling all who perished during the Holocaust, this year's program features an evening of music, candle-lighting and remembrance. The keynote speaker is Dr. Anna Ornstein who was a child in Hungary when she was deported to the Auschwitz extermination camp with her parents. Copies of her memoir, *My Mother's Eyes: Holocaust Memories of a Young Girl*, will be available after the program. The program is free, open to all, and wheelchair accessible. For more information, contact the Cambridge Peace Commission at 617-349-4694 or <www.cambridgema.gov/peace>.

- May 6 **Weekly support group for adults with LD/ADHD** (learning disabilities & attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) meets in Cambridge near Harvard Square, 6-7:30 p.m. every Wednesday. If you are interested, contact Angelica Sawyer at 617- 661-3117.
- May 6 **Manic Depression & Depressive Association (MDDA) Bipolar Support Group** meets every Wednesday evening, 7 - 9 p.m. at McLean Hospital in Belmont (Demarneffe Building, 1st floor lobby). Includes a lecture on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays. Call 617-855-3665 for more information.
- May 6 **NAMI Connection** – a support group for adults with mental illness, meets every Wednesday evening, 7 pm to 8:30 pm at Cambridge Hospital, 3rd Floor, Learning Center rooms C & D. The group is **free** and open to all who self-identify as having a mental illness, regardless of diagnosis. For more information, contact Carter at 617-776-7972 or <stbosai@arczip.com>.
- May 9 **Art of Europe** – This is one of the *Introductory Feeling for Form* tours of the permanent collections at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) for blind and low vision people. Each monthly session focuses on a different collection and will include wayfinding and verbal description of spaces. The tour begins at 1 pm. The Museum is committed to making both its buildings and programs accessible to visitors with disabilities. For more information, contact Valarie Burrows at 617-369-3302 or <access@mfa.org> or visit <www.mfa.org>. The MFA can be reached via the MBTA Green Line to MFA bus stop, or Orange Line to Ruggles Station. Please note: the Museum's West Wing Entrance on Museum Road is closed for renovations. Please use the Fenway entrance.
- May 9 **Laugh Out Loud Gala to benefit AANE** – Enjoy comedian Paula Poundstone and have fun with a silent and live auction, 6 pm at the Newton Marriot. Honorary Event Chairs Curt and Shonda Schilling.; individual tickets are \$200. Proceeds benefit the Asperger's Association of New England (AANE). For more information, Kristen White, Dir. of Development, 617-393-2824, x319 or <Kristen.White@AANE.org>.
- May 12 **Climb and Dine at MetroRock Climbing Center in Everett.** – Imagine conquering a big rock wall. Take a step up with Outdoor Explorations! Learn to climb or improve your basic skills in a fun indoor rock climbing gym. Choose your own challenges; equipment and instruction are customized to your needs. Outdoor Explorations programs are for people with and without disabilities and are designed to build teamwork, break down barriers, and have fun. This event is for adults; cost is \$50 per person and includes a pizza dinner at the end. For more information and to register, contact Outdoor Explorations at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or <info@outdoorex.org>.
- May 12 **Boston Voice Users is a group for people who use speech recognition or dictation software.** They meet 7:30 – 9:30 pm on the 2nd Tuesday of each month at MIT in Building 2, Rm.135. To find out more about meetings and discussions go to <www.bostonvoiceusers.org>.
- May 14 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- May 15 **Contours of Inclusion: the Intersection between the Arts and Universal Design for Learning** – Discover how arts-based instruction and the principles of Universal Design for Learning can support learning across disciplines for all students. This conference for parents, art/general/special education teachers is at U. Mass Boston, 9am – 5pm, and includes breakout sessions and discussion time in both morning and afternoon. **DEADLINE for registration is May 5; \$75/person; \$35/student.** Fee includes breakfast, lunch and reception. Sponsored by U. Mass Boston, VSA arts of Massachusetts, and Lesley University. For more information contact the Education Department at VSA arts of Massachusetts, 617-350-7713 voice, 617-350-6536 TTY or <education@vsamass.org>.
- May 21 **Autism Support Group** – meets 3rd Thursday of each month, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Central Square Branch of Cambridge Public Library, 45 Pearl Street in Cambridge. For more information contact Lorraine Iacopucci at <liacopucci@nsarc.org> or 978-624-2304.
- May 27 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1 to 3 p.m. at State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, 2nd floor Conference Room #2. Call 617-973-7507 voice or 617-973-7089 TTY for more information or request interpreters. Security measures require proper ID for access to meetings.
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- May 27 **Indoor Kayaking for youth** -- Learn new skills or hone your kayaking techniques in a controlled indoor pool environment. Experienced staff from Outdoor Explorations will introduce basic kayak equipment and safety, paddle strokes, and rescue techniques. You will get a chance to practice paddling and entering and exiting a kayak adapted to meet your specific needs. Gain the confidence and skill you need to paddle in the open water. Fee is \$50/person. For more information and to register, contact Outdoor Explorations at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or <info@outdoorexp.org>
- May 28 **U. S. Access Board “Town Hall” meeting** – at the Fairmont Copley Plaza, 138 St. James Ave, State Suite, Boston from 9am – 5pm. Morning session will feature experts on promoting accessibility in design education and making it an integral part of the curriculum in higher and continuing education. Afternoon will include a panel discussion on accessible museum exhibit design and presentations by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB). There will be “open microphones” throughout the day so that the public can share accessibility concerns. At 6:30 pm the Institute for Human Centered Design, 200 Portland Street, Boston, 02114 will host a reception. For additional information, contact Kathy Roy Johnson at <johnson@access-board.gov>, 202-272-0041 voice, or 800-993-2822 TTY.
- June 3 **Indoor Kayaking for adults** – Learn new skills or hone your kayaking techniques in a controlled indoor pool environment. Experienced staff from Outdoor Explorations will introduce basic kayak equipment and safety, paddle strokes, and rescue techniques. Fee is \$50/person. See May 27 listing for details. For more information and to register, contact Outdoor Explorations at 781-395-4999 voice, 781-395-4184 TTY or <info@outdoorexp.org>.
- June 5 **BCIL Construction Industry Night at the POPS** – 30th annual fundraiser for Boston Center for Independent Living hosted by O’Connor Constructors and Perini Corporation. Cocktail & Dinner Reception at 5:30 pm, Boston Pops Concert at 8 pm all at Boston Symphony Hall, 301 Massachusetts Avenue in Boston. Individual tickets are \$150; sponsorships and advertising are available. For more information contact David Sternburg at 617-338-6665, ext. 223 or <dsternburg@bostoncil.org>.
- June 6 **Disability Reframed: A Community Film Series** – Come to a FREE matinee screening, as we kickoff our new film series. We will be showing Tim Burton’s *Edward Scissorhands* at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (location TBA) at 2 pm. The film will be followed by a moderated discussion about how this iconic motion picture can be viewed as an allegory about disability and physical difference, and what it says about our society. For more information contact the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities at 617-349-4692 voice, 617-492-0235 TTY or <cthompson@cambridgema.gov>.
- June 6 **Outdoor Kayak for youth at Hale Reservation in Westwood, MA** – Join Outdoor Explorations for a fun-filled day on the water. Learn new skills or improve your technique and make new friends as you paddle a stable tandem kayak adapted to meet your specific needs. Experienced staff will introduce the basics of kayaks, kayak safety, paddle strokes, and the excitement of traveling on the water. **Cost is \$60/person.** See June 3 listing for contact information.
- June 10 **Outdoor Kayak for adults on the lower Mystic Lake in Medford** – see June 6 listing for youth event for a description and contact information. The adult program will be offered again on June 24.
- June 11 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.
- June 13 **Cambridge River Festival – noon to 6 pm** along Memorial Drive from JFK Street to Western Avenue. Music, entertainment, crafts, food a community service tables. Since Memorial Drive will be closed, people with disabilities may be dropped off at the intersection of DeWolfe & Cowperthwaite St.
- June 14 **Art of America** – Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) 1 pm This is one of the *Introductory Feeling for Form* tours of the permanent collections at the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston for blind and low vision people. See May 9 listing for more information and directions.
- June 17 **Outdoor Rock Climbing for all ages** – Enjoy a day of climbing on some of the local Boston area crags. Climbers of all abilities are welcome. Experienced instructors will be on hand to teach skills and assist in solving particular climbing routes.. Cost is \$40 per person. See June 10 listing for contact information at Outdoor Explorations.
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- June 19 **Accelerate, art completion entry DEADLINE** for emerging artists with disabilities, ages 16-25. This is a national juried exhibition with \$60,000 in awards sponsored by VSA arts and Volkswagen Group of America. Selected work will debut at the S. Dillon Ripley Center of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. from September 10, 2009 to January 6, 2010. For more information, contact VSAart at <www.vsarts.org/PreBuilt/showcase/gallery/exhibits/vw/current/index.html>, 800-933-8721 voice, or 202-737-0645 TTY.
- June 24 **Access Advisory Committee to the MBTA** meets 1 to 3 p.m. See March 25 listing for details.
- July 9 **Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CCPD) monthly meeting** – 51 Inman Street, 2nd floor Conference Room, 5:30 to 7 p.m. with opportunity for public comment.

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

The Commission was established in 1979 to act as a clearinghouse on disability and access issues throughout the City of Cambridge. We strive to raise awareness of disability matters, to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunity for people with all types of disabilities – physical, mental and sensory. The Commission provides information, referral, guidance, and technical assistance to individuals and their families, employers, public agencies, businesses and private non-profit organizations.

The goal of our 11-member citizen advisory board, comprised primarily of individuals with disabilities, is to maximize access to all aspects of Cambridge community life. Our regularly scheduled Commission meetings, which always include an opportunity for public comment, are held at 5:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month.

Access Notice: The City of Cambridge and Commission for Persons with Disabilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability. This newsletter is available in e-mail, large print and other alternative formats upon request. To add your name to our mailing list, to inquire about alternative formats, or for information about other auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications in policies and procedures, contact CCPD.

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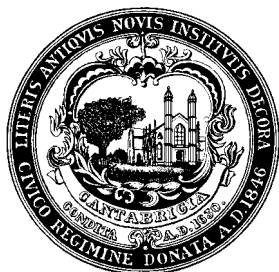
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AccessLetter is produced by the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities,
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51 Inman Street, second floor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02139

We welcome your articles, comments, criticisms, and suggestions. Write us!

Read past issues on our website: www.cambridgema.gov/DHSP2/disabilities.cfm

If you would rather receive your copy of **AccessLetter** electronically, please provide us with your name and e-mail address. To request that your name be removed from our mailing list, contact us at 617-349-4692 Voice, 617-492-0235 TTY, 617-349-4766 Fax, or cthompson@cambridgema.gov

Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities

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